
The Other Side of the Closet

by Ed Roy

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Left to right: Matt Boucher, Bill Allen, Nathan Frye, Stacy Powell, Juliet Tanner in NCTC's 2001 production, directed by Arturo Catricala. Photo: Lois Tema

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CLOSET

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The Other Side of the Closet was originally produced by Young Peoples Theatre of Toronto, in collaboration with Youtheatre of Montreal in November 1997, with the following cast:

CARL	John Gordon
RICK	Peter Henein
TARA/RACHEL	M.J. Kang
PAULETTE	Corrine Murray
JUSTIN / ANTONY	Jamie Robinson

Directed by Michael Lefebvre
Designed by Simon Guilbault
Original Music and Sound - Cathy Nosaty
Lighting Design - Seve Lucas
Stage Manager -: Marinda deBeer

The Other Side of the Closet United States Premier was presented by the New Conservatory Theatre Center of San Francisco in the fall of 2000, with the following cast:

CARL	Rob Dario
RICK	Bill Allen

TARA/RACHEL	Megan Harding
PAULETTE	Desiree Rogers
JUSTIN / ANTONY	Tony Nam

Artistic Director/Producer Ed Decker
Directed by Arturo Catricala
Scenic/Technical Director – Rob Vogt
Lighting Designer – Lasse Christiansen
Costume Designer – Justo Talamantz
Stage Manager – Brittany Kamerschen
Educational Consultant – Lisa Heft
Educational Programs Coordinator – Talya Brosh

Character Descriptions

CARL – 16, a gay student who has been in the closet. He must come to terms with his own sexuality and the aftermath of what happens when he is "outed" to his family & peers

RICK – 16, Carl's homophobic friend who turns on him and acts out in violence when he discovers that Carl is gay

JUSTIN – 16, Carl's friend who participates in homophobic behavior, but also makes some effort to understand Carl

ANTONY – 16, A gay peer of Carl's that he meets in a GSA meeting, who is comfortable with himself and his sexuality

PAULETTE – 15, Carl's friend who is dating Rick, she is the voice of reason in the play and stands by Carl though his coming out process

TARA – 16, Paulette's friend who has a crush on Carl, she is heavily

influenced by her parents' views on homosexuals, and does not support Carl after he comes out

RACHEL – 16, Antony's lesbian friend

Five Actor Version

(Doubling Suggestions)

Carl

Rick

Paulette

Justin/Antony

Tara/Rachel

Voice-Overs

MARION, Carl's mother

FRANK, Carl's father

Hot-Line volunteers

Various student voices

Setting

A City. The present.

Note

Underlined locations, etc. in the play may be changed to fit the community where this piece is being performed.

The Other Side of the Closet

Scene One

(On the street. The sound of city traffic is heard. RICK, JUSTIN, and CARL enter.)

CARL: Faggot!

RICK: Hey you! What are you looking at?

JUSTIN: Yeah, he's talking to you, queer ball.

CARL: Look at him just standing there.

RICK: Probably wants us to go over and give him a kiss.

JUSTIN: Kiss this, faggot!

CARL: Is this what you want, faggot?!

RICK: Come on, let's get him before he takes off.

JUSTIN: Yeah, run faggot run!

CARL: Faggot!

RICK: Pervert!

JUSTIN: Pig!

CARL, JUSTIN, and RICK: (Together.) Faggot, pervert, pig!! Faggot, pervert, pig!! Faggot, pervert, pig!! Faggot, pervert, pig!!

RICK: Kick him in the head! Kick him!

CARL: How do you like that, faggot?

JUSTIN: Oh, the fairy's crying.

RICK: Freak.

CARL: Come on guys, that's enough.

RICK: One more for luck.

JUSTIN: Let's go before someone calls the cops.

CARL: Rick, that's enough.

RICK: Just giving the faggot what he deserves. Let's go! Yeeha!

(The boys run off as the sound of car horns in a traffic jam blare.)

Scene Two

(On the street. PAULETTE and TARA enter.)

TARA: Where the hell are they?

PAULETTE: Did you really expect them to be on time?

TARA: what if they don't show up?

PAULETTE: We'll go without them.

(CARL, JUSTIN, and RICK enter.)

JUSTIN: That was too much, man. Did you see his face when we caught him?

CARL: He was so scared he probably crapped his pants.

PAULETTE: Look who finally made it.

TARA: What took you guys?

RICK: We had some important business we had to take care of.

PAULETTE: More like you had to wait until somebody finished doing the dishes before mommy would let them out of the house.

JUSTIN: More like we had to take care of the trash.

(The guys laugh.)

RICK: Whoa, check that one out.

JUSTIN: Man, that is one ugly woman.

CARL: That's not a woman, dummy.

RICK: It's a faggot!

PAULETTE: Rick...

TARA: Eww! I wouldn't be caught dead in that outfit.

CARL: Hey faggot, what are you hiding under that dress?

PAULETTE: Leave him alone.

RICK: It's sick, man.

PAULETTE: It's none of our business.

JUSTIN: It's just too freaky.

PAULETTE: What is?

CARL: Guys wearing dresses...

JUSTIN: And having sex with other guys.

RICK: Faggots!

PAULETTE: Will you please stop that? It's embarrassing.

TARA: God, I saw these two guys kissing in a movie and I was really grossed out—yuck—

RICK: Know what I'd do if one ever came on to me?

RICK, CARL, and JUSTIN: (Together.) Crunch him!

PAULETTE: Did we come downtown to see a concert or watch you guys act like jerks?

RICK: What's got into you?

PAULETTE: You're all acting like idiots over something you don't know anything about.

RICK: Oh yeah? What if a girl came on to you? Would you like that—

TARA: Ewww!

CARL: He's hoping you'll say yes so he can watch.

PAULETTE: Shut up, Carl...

JUSTIN: Lesbo alert, lesbo alert!

PAULETTE: Don't get too excited, Justin, you diaper might fall off.

RICK: She's not a lesbo, Justin, believe me.

JUSTIN: You never know who she might be fantasizing about when she's kissing you.

TARA: Hey, don't you think if anyone would be able to tell if Paulette was a dyke, it would be me?

JUSTIN: How?

TARA: Think about it.

RICK: 'Cause you'd always be looking at her boobs!

JUSTIN: And you'd weigh about two hundred pounds...

CARL: You'd be bald, pierced, and tattooed everywhere.

PAULETTE: Not all lesbians look like pro wrestlers with boobs. What about Melissa Ethridge?

JUSTIN: She isn't exactly good-looking...

PAULETTE: Yes she is, and she's a great singer, too.

JUSTIN: Her music sucks.

TARA: My parents don't want me to buy her CDs.

PAULETTE: Why? Are they afraid if you do you'll turn into a lesbian or something?

TARA: Listen, my mother can't even hear the word "homosexual" without crossing herself.

RICK: Hey, if me or any of my brothers ever told our parents we were gay, we'd be booted out on our ass before we knew what hit us.

PAULETTE: You think they'd really do that?

RICK: You should have heard my dad last summer when he saw that Gay Pride Parade on the news. Man, he hit the roof!

CARL: Why do they have to have a friggin' Pride Day in the first place is what I want to know.

JUSTIN: Yeah, what do they have to be proud of?

TARA: My mother would have a heart attack if I told her I was a dyke.

PAULETTE: Tara...

TARA: I bet she'd immediately call a priest to perform an emergency exorcism.

PAULETTE: Why should it make any difference to her if you were gay?

TARA: Get real—my mother? She believes that people like that live in a state of sin because it's against the will of God.

RICK: It says that in the Bible somewhere, doesn't it?

CARL: Who knows? It's not the kind of thing we ever talk about around our house.

TARA: All I know is if the Pope says it's wrong that's good enough for my mom.

PAULETTE: I suppose none of your parents know anybody who's gay?

CARL: My parents? / Yeah right.

JUSTIN: (Overlapping.) No way.

RICK: What about yours?

PAULETTE: Of course. My Uncle Greg.

RICK: The guy you introduced me to at your house last week?

PAULETTE: Yes.

RICK: I thought you said he was a cop.

PAULETTE: He is.

CARL: You serious?

PAULETTE: Yes.

JUSTIN: A fag cop?
TARA: Is that legal?
PAULETTE: Of course it is.
RICK: But he didn't act like one.
PAULETTE: What did you expect? He was off duty.
RICK: No, I mean he didn't act like a fag.
PAULETTE: Could you stop saying "fag"? He's my uncle, okay?
RICK: Okay.
CARL: Whose brother is he?
PAULETTE: My dad's.
JUSTIN: And it's cool with him?
PAULETTE: Yeah, and my mom too.
RICK: I've never had a girlfriend who had a gay uncle before.
PAULETTE: And you won't have one for much longer if your attitude doesn't change.
(Pause.)
TARA: So, is anybody going to buy me one of the band's T-shirts?
JUSTIN: With what money?
RICK: Your uncle doesn't care if he gets AIDS?
PAULETTE: I'm sure he thinks about it just as much as anybody else.
TARA: Come on, guys, I don't want to miss the opening act.
RICK: All I'm saying is he's a fa—... gay, he could get AIDS...
PAULETTE: Yes—just like anybody else if they don't practice safe sex.
RICK: Yeah, but they kind of started it, right?

(PAULETTE walks away.)
Hey...
PAULETTE: Get away from me...
(She exits.)
TARA: You are such an idiot. Paulette, wait up.
(TARA exits after her.)
CARL: Way to go man, you really pissed her off.
RICK: She didn't even mention that he was a fag. What did she expect? I mean it's weird, isn't it? Don't you think it's weird?
JUSTIN: I guess fags gotta have relatives too.
CARL: You better tell you're sorry or she'll be miserable all night.
JUSTIN: Yeah, and I'm planning to make the move on Tara tonight, but there's going to be no way if you guys are fighting.
RICK: Don't waste your time. She hasn't gotten over Carl yet.
JUSTIN: So she can fantasize about him while we're making out, it doesn't matter to me.
RICK: You're an animal.
JUSTIN: Grrr!
CARL: So you going to tell her you're sorry?
RICK: Yeah, yeah...
JUSTIN: Then let's go.
(They run off. Concert transition music is heard.)

Scene Three

(We hear the sounds of a crowded hallway. The school bell rings as PAULETTE and TARA enter.)

PAULETTE: Tara, hurry up.

TARA: What's the rush?

PAULETTE: I just want to get to my next class.

TARA: You're trying to avoid Rick, aren't you? Have you talked to him since last night?

PAULETTE: No, and I don't intend to.

TARA: Ever?

PAULETTE: If he doesn't smarten up.

TARA: But he's one of the cutest guys in school.

PAULETTE: Tara, there are more important things in life than just going out with cute guys.

(CARL enters and walks over to them.)

TARA: I know, but they're not as much fun.

CARL: Paulette...

TARA: Hi Carl.

CARL: HI. Uh, Rick told me if I saw you to tell you to wait for him at your locker at lunch.

PAULETTE: Well let's pretend you didn't see me, okay?

CARL: You still mad at him?

PAULETTE: I was, but now I'm working on total indifference.

CARL: Didn't he apologize for what he said last night?

PAULETTE: So what? He's still homophobic.

CARL: So what's that got to do with you and him?

PAULETTE: Do you even know what that means?

CARL: Yeah, sure... it means he doesn't like homos.

PAULETTE: It means he's sexist, and I don't find that very attractive.

TARA: Give the guy a break, Paulette. He's not a total sexist pig just because he doesn't like Gays.

PAULETTE: Look, this might be hard for you to understand, but I really care about my Uncle. And I know he's been hurt by a lot of ignorant people, who just hate him because he's Gay. That's why I can't stand to be around anybody who talks about other people as if they've got no right to live just because they're different. It shouldn't matter if a person's Gay—straight—tall—short—blue-eyed—Arab—or Jewish. People are people and they deserve to be treated with respect.

CARL: Jeez, lighten up. It's not like he really believes they don't have a right to live.

PAULETTE: You ever asked him?

CARL: Now you're being stupid.

PAULETTE: Am I? He didn't care how those guys felt being called fags last night. Neither did you.

TARA: Okay, Paulette, you made your point. I think Carl understands how you feel.

Now can we maybe talk about something else like... Carl, are you going to come over to my place and watch videos Saturday night?

CARL: Ummm...

TARA: Everybody else is coming. Paulette's coming, aren't you Paulette?

PAULETTE: I haven't decided yet.

(RICK and JUSTIN enter.)

RICK: There you are. I've been looking for you all morning.

PAULETTE: I've got to get to my next class.

RICK: Are we meeting at lunch?

PAULETTE: I can't.

RICK: Why not?

JUSTIN: Were going to my place to make grilled cheese sandwiches. You wanna come Tara?

TARA: Ahh...

PAULETTE: Sorry, I gotta go. (She moves to exit.) You coming Tara?

TARA: Ah, yeah...Sorry, maybe next time.

(The girls exit.)

CARL: She's still mad at you.

RICK: Yeah, I figured that out, but how many times am I supposed to say I'm sorry her Uncle's Gay.

JUSTIN: Is that what you told her?

RICK: Don't be stupid. I tried to tell her I was sorry but...

CARL: She didn't believe you.

RICK: So what am I supposed to do? Say "I love fags" or something?

JUSTIN: Maybe she really is a lesbian.

RICK: Will you shut up?

CARL: What are you going to do?

RICK: I don't know.

CARL: Ummm, well why don't you try calling her at home tonight and uh...tell her that...you know she cares about her uncle...

RICK: Yeah...

CARL: And ummm...You've thought about what you said and you realized that you were being "insensitive".

RICK: Oh that's good.

CARL: Say that it's cool for him to live the kind of life he chooses...and even though you don't understand it...

JUSTIN: Are you really going to say that?

RICK: Shut up.

CARL: Oh yeah, and that you really don't hate anybody just because they're different...and you've got to say it like to mean it, right?

RICK: Think it'll work?

CARL: Depends on how much you want it to.

JUSTIN: Yeah, but we really know what he really wants.

RICK: And that's probably something that you won't experience until you finally save enough money to pay for it.

CARL: Look, I've got to get to my next class...

RICK: Yeah, me too.

CARL: Catch you guys at lunch?

JUSTIN: Yeah.

RICK: Thanks Carl.

CARL: No problem. See you later.

(The bell rings as they all exit. The sound of the bell transforms into the sound of a doorbell.)

Scene Four

(Tara's house. Saturday night. TARA and JUSTIN enter.)

TARA: You're early.

JUSTIN: Am I?

TARA: We said nine.

JUSTIN: Oh... so nobody else is here?

TARA: Not yet.

JUSTIN: Guess we'll have to find something to do until the others get here, huh?

TARA: What do you have in mind?
JUSTIN: Your parents home?
TARA: No, they went out for the night.
JUSTIN: Then maybe we could just ...
(He moves towards her.)
TARA: What are you doing?
JUSTIN: I was going to ... you know...
TARA: What?
JUSTIN: Uh...
TARA: Were you going to kiss me?
JUSTIN: Uh... yeah...I guess so...
TARA: Justin, I like you and everything, but not in that way.
JUSTIN: Oh, sure, I understand...
TARA: I'm still kind of interested in someone else.
JUSTIN: Yeah, sure...Sorry...(Beat.) Oh, by the way, Carl's not coming over tonight.
TARA: How do you know?
JUSTIN: I talked to him on the phone today.
TARA: Oh, you talked to him earlier...
JUSTIN: Yeah...
TARA: And when you were talking to him did you happen to tell him you thought things might turn out better for you if he didn't show up tonight?
JUSTIN: What are you talking about?
TARA: Forget it, just forget it.
JUSTIN: Look, don't get mad at me because he had something else

to do.
TARA: I couldn't care less about what Carl's doing tonight.
JUSTIN: Okay, if you say so.
TARA: I'm going to go make some popcorn.
JUSTIN: Want me to help?
TARA: No. *(The doorbell rings.)*Will you get it?
JUSTIN: Sure.
(JUSTIN exits. We hear the voices of the others.)
RICK: *(Offstage.)*Hey Justin, what's going on? You head of the house now?
JUSTIN: *(Offstage.)*Yeah, right.
(TARA exits)
PAULETTE: *(Offstage.)*Where's Tara?
(They enter.)
JUSTIN: Making popcorn. What movies did you get?
RICK: I was going to get Night of the Slasher...
JUSTIN: Seen it...
RICK: But instead I nabbed a new one just released on video, Dream Crawler Three: Disemboweler in the City.
PAULETTE: The plot sounds incredibly stupid so let's watch the one I picked first.
RICK: I don't care which one you put on first because we won't be watching much of either one will we?
(RICK puts his arms around PAULETTE as TARA enters.)
TARA: Oh great. Are you two going to start making out before we even start the video?
PAULETTE: Hi Tara.

TARA: Hi.

RICK: Why don't we throw on Dream Crawler now and save... what's it called?

PAULETTE: 10 Things I Hate About You...

RICK: For when Carl gets here.

JUSTIN: He's not coming.

RICK: Why not?

JUSTIN: He said he had to do some family thing, I don't know.

RICK: Boring. But we can still have fun without him, can't we?

(RICK pulls PAULETTE to him.)

PAULETTE: Hey...

RICK: Can't we? Hmmm?

PAULETTE: Maybe, if you're a good boy.

RICK: Oh, I'll be good. *(He kisses her.)*

TARA: Guys, are we going to have to watch you suck face all night?

RICK: you don't have to watch us. What do you think the videos are for?

PAULETTE: Rick...

RICK: What?

PAULETTE: Just cool your jets for a bit.

RICK: Okay, but just because Carl didn't show up doesn't mean she has to take it out on us.

TARA: You didn't tell him, did you?

RICK: It's not like I couldn't figure it out myself.

TARA: I asked you specifically not to tell Rick.

RICK: She just asked me if Carl ever talked about you.

TARA: And you told Carl?

RICK: Forget about Carl. What about Justin?

TARA: What about him?

JUSTIN: Leave me out of it. Why don't we start the video?

RICK: Whatever...

TARA: You planned this, didn't you?

JUSTIN: Planned what?

TARA: You asked Carl not to come figuring since he wasn't here I'd make out with you, right?

JUSTIN: No...

TARA: Then why were you early?

JUSTIN: I just got here first.

RICK: Get real! Justin's not smart enough to plan something that complicated.

JUSTIN: You saying I'm stupid?

TARA: I don't think I'm in the mood to do this any more.

PAULETTE: Oh come on, Tara, I'm sure they didn't plan this.

TARA: How do you know?

RICK: Jeez, get a grip. You're starting to sound so paranoid.

TARA: I think you're going to have to find somewhere else to have your make-out fest.

JUSTIN: We didn't plan this. I swear.

TARA: I don't care

(She exits.)

JUSTIN: Rick, tell her we didn't plan this—We didn't plan this, did we?

PAULETTE: I think you guys better leave.
RICK: What about you?
PAULETTE: I'm going to stay with Tara.
RICK: Why?
JUSTIN: We really didn't plan this, Paulette, I swear...
PAULETTE: Because she's upset.
RICK: She'll get over it.
JUSTIN: Paulette—
PAULETTE: I'm not going to leave her alone.
RICK: But I've got my dad's car—we could drive around or something.
JUSTIN: Just tell her we didn't...
RICK: Will you shut up about that already?
PAULETTE: Why don't you and Justin go for a drive?
RICK: This is not happening, this is not happening.
PAULETTE: Call me in a couple of hours. Maybe by then I'll be able to get her to change her mind.
RICK: What if she doesn't?
RACHEL: You're just going to have to wait and see.
RICK: Aw, come on...
(RICK and PAULETTE kiss.)
PAULETTE: I'll be waiting for your call.
RICK: Okay...let's go.
JUSTIN: I didn't even get any popcorn.
(They exit. Transition music.)

Scene Five

(The transition music becomes ambient street noise. RICK and JUSTIN are cruising in Rick's car downtown.)

RICK: You can't be serious. You're telling me you saw your mother naked?
JUSTIN: Yeah, I walked in on her in the bathroom once when she was drying up after a bath.
RICK: You saw everything?
JUSTIN: Yeah.
RICK: And?
JUSTIN: No way.
RICK: I just want to know what her...
JUSTIN: No.
RICK: Why not?
JUSTIN: Because she's my mother, that's why.
(Beat.)
RICK: Hey, look over there...
(RICK points at somebody on the sidewalk.)
Hey faggot, where's your boyfriend?
JUSTIN: He's talking to you, faggot! Look, he's freaking. *(Pause.)*
Hey Rick, look.
RICK: What?
JUSTIN: Over there.
RICK: Holy fu— ... It can't be...
(RICK and JUSTIN stare slack-jawed at someone on the street.)
JUSTIN: It is.
RICK: He's taking off.

JUSTIN: Follow him.

RICK: I've gotta wait for the car in front of me to move, dummy.

JUSTIN: He's getting away.

RICK: Can you still see him?

JUSTIN: Yeah, but we're going to lose him.

(Car horns blare.)

RICK: Come on, come on, asshole! Is this guy in front of us sleeping? I'm freaked, man.

JUSTIN: Rick, the light's changed.

RICK: What? Oh, right...totally freaked...

JUSTIN: Yeah, me too.

(Car horns blast as RICK and JUSTIN exit.)

Scene Six

(Tara's house. PAULETTE and TARA enter.)

TARA: What could be so important that he couldn't tell you it over the phone?

PAULETTE: I don't know. All he said was that they saw something freaky downtown.

TARA: He's just made something up so they can come over.

PAULETTE: No, he sounded upset.

TARA: They better not be expecting to have a make-out party.

PAULETTE: We'll just kick them out if they try.

(The doorbell rings.)

TARA: I just know this is going to be so lame. *(TARA exits.)* I want them in and out as fast as possible.

PAULETTE: Will you just open the door and let them in, God.

(We hear TARA talking offstage.)

TARA: *(Offstage.)* Well, look who it is. I thought you couldn't make it.

(TARA and CARL enter.)

CARL: Oh yeah,, well I escaped and I thought I'd drop by. How were the videos?

PAULETTE: We didn't watch them.

CARL: So where are the guys?

PAULETTE: They're on their way over.

CARL: They haven't been here yet?

TARA: They were here...

PAULETTE: But we needed a little time by ourselves...

(The doorbell rings.)

TARA: That's them now.

(TARA exits again.)

CARL: Did you and Rick have another fight or something?

PAULETTE: Ah no, not really...Tara and I just needed to talk...you know, personal stuff.

(We hear the voices of the others.)

RICK: *(Offstage.)* Man, this is so mind-blowing. Where's Paulette?

TARA: *(Offstage.)* In the living room.

JUSTIN: *(Offstage.)* I would never have believed it unless I saw it myself

(They enter.)

RICK: Paulette...

CARL: Hi guys. What's going on? What are you looking at? Did I grow another head or something?

RICK: What are you doing here?

CARL: I thought maybe you'd still be watching videos.

JUSTIN: Didn't you have something better to do?

RICK: Yeah, something with your "family"?

PAULETTE: Why are you guys acting so weird?

RICK: So how's the "family," Carl?

CARL: Fine...

JUSTIN: What did you do? Go out for a big "family" dinner?

CARL: No, we ate at home.

RICK: You sure.

CARL: Why wouldn't I be?

RICK: We thought maybe you and the "family" went downtown for a little walk on the wild side.

TARA: Will you tell us what you're talking about?

RICK: Carl knows what I'm talking about, don't you?

CARL: No, as a matter of fact, I don't.

RICK: Then let me fill you in. You see, when Justin and I left here earlier we thought we'd drive around to kill some time and we happened to drive into the Castro...You know what's in the Castro don't you?

JUSTIN: Don't try to pretend you don't know what kind of bars are there...

RICK: Because who do you think we saw hanging out there with all the other fags? (Beat.) Come on, guess.

(CARL moves to exit and RICK steps in his way.)

Didn't you hear us calling you?

JUSTIN: We tried to get your attention when we saw you leaving the steps of the Midnight Sun.

TARA: Oh come on, this is one of your sick jokes.

RICK: Is it, Carl? Or are you a fag who goes to the Castro to pick up other fags? Is that why you were there?

CARL: Shut up, Rick...

RICK: You going to make me, queerboy?

PAULETTE: Rick, leave him alone. Just because he was on Castro doesn't mean—

RICK: Oh, we didn't just see him on the street...

JUSTIN: We followed him and saw him go in some fag bar called The Café.

TARA: How do you know what kind of bar it was?

RICK: Because we saw other fags going in with him.

PAULETTE: Maybe you made a mistake. It could have been someone else.

TARA: Why don't you say something?

RICK: Because it was you, wasn't it?

CARL: Get out of my way.

RICK: Make me.

TARA: Come on, guys. I don't want you to wreck the place, my parents are going to be home any second...

JUSTIN: Don't make him bleed, Rick, you could get AIDS.

PAULETTE: Stop it!

RICK: You want to fight me, faggot?

CARL: I just want to get out of here.

PAULETTE: Let him go, Rick...

(TARA grabs a portable phone.)

TARA: I swear if you start fighting in here I'll call the cops. Guys I'm dialing. Hello?

RICK: Okay, okay...

(RICK moves out of CARL way. CARL leaves quickly.)

You better run, faggot!

PAULETTE: Shut up, Rick. God, he's your friend.

RICK: Are you nuts? I don't have faggots for friends.

PAULETTE: What about all those things you said to me on the phone?

RICK: We were talking about your uncle. Not one of my ex-best friends who I trusted...who I thought I knew...

PAULETTE: He's still the same person.

RICK: Except he's a fag, and that's supposed to be cool, right? Sorry, it's not.

PAULETTE: You better leave—and don't bother calling me again.

RICK: You serious?

(PAULETTE exits.)

TARA: Take a hint, Rick. I think she means it.

RICK: Yeah, well I was stupid to call her in the first place. *(RICK moves to exit.)* Maybe you should introduce Carl to your uncle. Wouldn't they make a nice couple?

TARA: Okay, that's enough, Rick, just leave.

RICK: Don't worry, I'm going.

(He exits.)

TARA: You too, Justin.

JUSTIN: What did I do?

RICK: *(Offstage.)* Justin, you want a lift home or you planning to walk?

JUSTIN: Okay, okay, I'm coming.

(JUSTIN exits. TARA stands alone on stage. A school bell rings.)

Scene Seven

(A school bell rings and we hear the sounds of students in a crowded hallway.)

TARA: No I never went out with him—I thought he was cute, so what? We were just friends.

(RICK enters.)

RICK: *(Overlapping.)* Friends? Are you nuts? Yeah, I said it right to her face. I mean, what did she expect, the guy's a freak.

(JUSTIN enters.)

JUSTIN: *(Overlapping.)* Freaked us out when we first spotted him. I'm surprised he showed up at school today. I mean, he must have known Rick was going to tell everybody.

(PAULETTE enters.)

PAULETTE: *(Overlapping.)* Everybody is talking about it so why should you be any different? Yes, I broke up with Rick. No, he didn't dump me. I don't know if it's true. I wasn't in the car when they said they saw him.

ALL: *(Together.)* Fag, homo, fairy, queer! Fag, homo, fairy, queer! Fag, homo, fairy, queer! Fag, homo, fairy, queer!

(The chanting reaches a crescendo and ends abruptly at the sound of a slamming door. We hear the voice-overs of MARION and FRANK.)

MARION: Carl, is that you?

CARL: Yeah, sorry I'm late.

(He moves to exit.)

MARION: Carl...

CARL: Yeah?

MARION: We got some disturbing phone calls today...

CARL: From who?

MARION: Some kids. I thought I recognized some of their voices...
I wasn't sure...

CARL: What were they calling about?

MARION: Are you in some kind of trouble with a gang at school?

CARL: No.

MARION: Then why were those boys calling here?

CARL: I don't know.

MARION: I didn't say anything to your father because I wanted to
talk to you about it first.

CARL: I don't know why they were calling.

MARION: They kept asking if you were...they were saying things
about you...

CARL: I just got into a fight with one of the guys at school, that's
all...

MARION: Why were you fighting?

CARL: Mom, can we talk bout this later? Please?

MARION: Okay, go and get cleaned up.

*(CARL moves to exit as the phone rings. He stops. We hear Carl's father
answering the phone. CARL listens.)*

FRANK: Hello? What? Who is this? Hello? Hello? *(We hear a dial
tone.)*Where's Carl?

MARION: Washing up.

FRANK: Some kid just called.

MARION: They've been calling all day.

FRANK: All day?

MARION: He was in a fight and now some kids are trying to get
back at him.

FRANK: Little creeps.

MARION: That's all he would tell me.

FRANK: You think it's serious?

MARION: I don't know.

CARL: And then we all sit down to dinner and nobody says any-
thing until the phone starts ringing again and Dad gets up to
answer it. I can see he's ready to explode but he doesn't. He's lis-
tening to the person talking but he doesn't say anything. Instead
he puts the receiver down and waits by the phone for a few sec-
onds—picks it up, dials "star 69," He starts talking— now yelling at
some kid's father—Mom and I just sit and listen until he slams the
phone down in disgust and comes back to the table. Feels like the
oxygen has left the room. He's sitting right there looking at me but
he seems a million miles away—almost as if he's checking to see if
there's anything different about me from a long distance. Can't let
him see how scared I am so I start eating even though the food's
sticking in my throat like wallpaper paste. "Dad, you going to eat
those potatoes or can I have them? Hey, I'm sorry about the phone
calls. Um, you know how it is. I got in a fight after a basketball
game 'cause the other guys sucked and now they're spreading this
stupid lie or rumor or whatever." He's back, like he snapped out of
a spell—"Look, I'll straighten it out tomorrow at school, okay? So
don't let it bum you out and ruin your dinner 'cause it's not worth
thinking about...Hey, if you don't think you can eat that other
pork chop I've got plenty of room." Suddenly we're back to normal
again. He's telling us about some rumor somebody spread about
him in university. My mother's laughing because she remembers.
By the end of dinner I have two helpings of everything and we're
all in a good mood. Then I tell them I'm going upstairs to study but

instead I go into the washroom and throw everything up until I think I'm going to start heaving internal organs because I have no idea how long it's going to be before they find out who was really lying.

(The sound of phones ringing is heard. After a few beats the sound of phones transforms into the sound of a school bell ringing.)

Scene Eight

(School hallway. CARL moves to exit as PAULETTE calls him from off-stage.)

PAULETTE: Carl. *(Entering.)* Hey, wait up.

CARL: What do you want?

PAULETTE: How about a simple "hello" for starters?

CARL: Hi.

(He moves to exit.)

PAULETTE: Where are you going?

CARL: Home.

PAULETTE: Mind if I walk with you?

CARL: Sure you want to be seen with me?

PAULETTE: Why wouldn't I?

CARL: I'm not one of the most popular people here lately.

PAULETTE: Neither am I since I broke up with Rick.

CARL: You guys really broke up?

PAULETTE: Please, he's such a jerk.

CARL: Yeah, so who isn't, right?

PAULETTE: How can you say that after the way he's been treating you? Last week you guys were best friends—everybody liked you—

and now they're treating you like....

CARL: Steve...Bosco?

PAULETTE: Steve who?

CARL: Bosco. He went to school here a couple of years ago and got labeled a fag because he popped a boner in the showers. I was there when it happened. I was getting dressed after gym and I heard the other guys yelling, "Check out the faggot with the boner!" Everybody was chasing him around—whacking him with wet towels—and he was dying from embarrassment. It's not like he tried to come on to anybody or anything. I'm sure it was like a total accident but nobody ever let him live it down.

PAULETTE: Did you talk to him about it?

CARL: Yeah, right. Once he was labeled a fag nobody talked to him and I watched how people treated him.

PAULETTE: How did you treat him?

CARL: I called him "Boner-boy Bosco" like everyone else. What are you looking at me like that for? I know it sucks, but what else was I supposed to do?

PAULETTE: I don't know, I wasn't there.

CARL: You probably would've said something to defend him, knowing you. You've got the guts to say what you think.

PAULETTE: So what happened to this Steve Bosco guy?

CARL: I think his family moved or something because he didn't come back the following year. Man it really freaked me when all that was going to, too, because that was just around the time...What the hell am I doing? Why am I telling you this?

PAULETTE: What's wrong?

CARL: Look, what are you trying to prove? That you're cool enough to have a fag for a friend or something?

PAULETTE: Isn't just wanting to be your friend enough?

(Pause.)

CARL: Guess I can't afford to be picky, can I?

PAULETTE: Thanks a lot.

CARL: I didn't mean it that way...

PAULETTE: Look, you don't have to tell me if you don't want to.

CARL: No...I want to... Around the time that all that crap was happening to Bosco guy I

was just beginning to realize that I was having the kinds of thoughts—feelings that everybody says you're not supposed to have, you know...

PAULETTE: About sex?

CARL: Yeah...and I couldn't help it. I knew I was supposed to be having these thoughts about girls but I wasn't.

PAULETTE: Did it scare you?

CARL: The thoughts didn't, but the idea of anyone finding out I was having them did. So I tried to stop myself from having them. I tried praying as hard as I could for them to go away but they just kept getting stronger and stronger. At night I'd lie awake in bed and try to pull all those thoughts and feelings together in my mind and shoot them out of me like a laser beam into outer space.

PAULETTE: And what happened when you did that?

CARL: I got a headache.

PAULETTE: So have you ever had a boyfriend or anything?

CARL: Shut up.

PAULETTE: What's wrong?

CARL: I've had girlfriends, you know.

PAULETTE: So? That doesn't mean you couldn't have boyfriends too.

CARL: Will you shut up?

PAULETTE: Why are you so embarrassed?

CARL: Because...

PAULETTE: So you've never kissed a guy or anything?

CARL: Paulette...

PAULETTE: Well?

CARL: You're too much, you know that? (Beat.) Okay, I've had a few experiences, but it was just kid stuff.

PAULETTE: You've never talked to anybody about this, have you?

CARL: I've called Gay Youth Line at LYRIC a couple times.

PAULETTE: Is that like a hotline or something?

CARL: I found out about it in The B.A.R., a free gay magazine you can get just about anywhere... I snuck a copy home one day.

PAULETTE: And what about when the guys saw you that night?

CARL: What about it? I wanted to see what that kind of place was like.... I...Okay, I'd been there once before.

PAULETTE: At that bar?

CARL: Yeah, Saturday was my second time.

PAULETTE: So what's it like?

CARL: Just like any other bar, I guess, except there were only two women in it that I could see. You know I don't hate women?

PAULETTE: Duh.

CARL: I know that's what some people think...Anyway I didn't really think I'd get in the first time. Then suddenly I'm in the place and my heart's in my mouth because I don't know what to expect. I mean for all I knew I could've been walking into an orgy palace. So I'm ready to run out at the first sign of weirdness. But then I'm looking around at all these different types of guys having a good time just like anybody. Like it's no big deal or anything. I didn't stay long though. I was too nervous. It was enough just to walk in

the door. That was about two months ago. I tried to forget about it.

PAULETTE: But you couldn't.

CARL: No... *(Beat.)* So I went back and ...you know the rest.

PAULETTE: Are you going there Friday night?

CARL: I don't think I'll be going back for quite a while.

PAULETTE: Then are you going to go to the school dance?

CARL: Hey, I'm gay, not stupid.

PAULETTE: I'd like to go....but I don't have a date.

CARL: You saying that because you want me to go with you?

PAULETTE: Would you?

CARL: Are you nuts?

PAULETTE: Why not? Come on, you're brave enough to go to a gay bar, but not the dance?

CARL: It's not the same and you know it.

PAULETTE: Carl, you've got just as much right to be there as anybody else.

CARL: I used to think I did.

PAULETTE: Unless you show people that you've got no reason to be ashamed they're going to treat you exactly the way they treated that Steve Bosco guy. All you have to do is show up.

CARL: I'll think about it.

(They exit.)

Scene Nine

(The dance. Dance music plays. JUSTIN enters, tugging TARA by the arm. The music fades into the background and continues to play throughout the scene.)

JUSTIN: No, no way. I hate dancing to that crap.

TARA: Aw, you said you'd dance with me tonight...

JUSTIN: I will, but not to that.

TARA: So what do you want to do then?

JUSTIN: I'm sure we can find something interesting to do while we wait for something better to dance to...

(He puts his arms around her.)

TARA: Like what?

JUSTIN: Like this...

(He moves to kiss her as RICK enters.)

RICK: Come on you two, break it up.

JUSTIN: Hi Rick...

RICK: Sorry, didn't mean to interrupt your lip lock.

TARA: Then why did you?

RICK: Because I need to talk to your new boyfriend.

JUSTIN: What about?

RICK: Beer.

JUSTIN: Cool.

RICK: Want to help me polish off a six-pack?

TARA: Where'd you get it?

JUSTIN: His brother probably got it for him. Didn't he?

RICK: He owed me a favor. Come on, let's go before they get warm.

JUSTIN: You coming?

TARA: No, I hate beer, but you go if you want to.

JUSTIN: you sure?

TARA: I told Paulette I'd meet her here, so I'll just hang out and wait for her.

RICK: You still hanging out with that loser?

TARA: She's my friend. And it's none of your business who I hang out with anyway.

RICK: What kind of friend?

TARA: You're twisted.

(RICK starts to exit.)

RICK: Oh, don't be mad at me, les—be—friends.

TARA: Why be friends? I'm sure you'd rather be at homo alone, playing with yourself.

JUSTIN: Good comeback.

RICK: Ha Ha.... *(He exits.)* You coming for a beer or what?

JUSTIN: I'll just have one and I'll be right back.

TARA: They won't let you back in if they smell beer on your breath.

(TARA gives him some gum.)

JUSTIN: Thanks.

TARA: I hope he's not going to be putting Paulette down all night.

JUSTIN: I'll ask him to quit it, okay?

(PAULETTE enters.)

TARA: Don't be long.

JUSTIN: I won't.

(He exits.)

PAULETTE: Hi...

TARA: You look great.

PAULETTE: Thanks, so do you. So how's it going?

TARA: All these dances are the same.

PAULETTE: No, I mean you and Justin.

TARA: Isn't it funny? He was hanging around the whole time I was moping over Carl and I didn't pay any attention to him.

PAULETTE: And now?

TARA: So far we're having fun.

PAULETTE: He is kind of cute.

TARA: Think so?

PAULETTE: Oh Yeah.

TARA: He's a good kisser too.

PAULETTE: Really

TARA: Would I lie to you about something like that, girlfriend?

PAULETTE: Who'd have thought?

TARA: Not me, girl?

PAULETTE: So where'd he go?

TARA: Rick brought some beer.

PAULETTE: Same old Rick.

TARA: I'm glad you decided to come.

PAULETTE: Me too ... I hope I don't get stood up.

TARA: You have a date? Who?

PAULETTE: You'll see.

TARA: Come on, tell me who it is. Is it Jason? Steve? I know, it's Robert Morgan.

PAULETTE: Nope.

TARA: Then who?

(CARL enters.)

PAULETTE: Here he is now.

TARA: Carl? Paulette, are you nuts? What's everybody going to think?

PAULETTE: I don't know and I don't care either.

CARL: Hi...How you doing, Tara?

TARA: Okay...

PAULETTE: How's it going?

CARL: I'm still not sure this was such a good idea. You should have seen the stares I got when I walked in.

PAULETTE: We'll really give them something to stare at when we're dancing.

CARL: I don't know...

PAULETTE: We've got to dance. That's what we came here for.

CARL: We'll see.

(JUSTIN enters. He hesitates before he approaches them and after a beat walks over.)

TARA: I was beginning to think you'd forgotten about me.

JUSTIN: No chance of that.

(Pause.)

PAULETTE: Aren't you guys going to say hi to each other? *(Pause.)* Justin?

JUSTIN: Uh, hi.

CARL: Hi.

PAULETTE: Carl, let's go and dance.

CARL: Uh...

(She pulls him along.)

PAULETTE: We'll see you in there.

(They exit.)

JUSTIN: What's he doing here?

TARA: I'm sure it was Paulette's idea.

JUSTIN: It's like they're both just asking for trouble.

TARA: Well you know it'd be useless trying to talk them into leaving. Once she makes her mind up about something nobody can change it. So let's just mind our own business and dance.

(She tries to tug him toward the gym but he doesn't budge.)

JUSTIN: I told Rick we'd wait here for him.

TARA: I thought I was your date.

JUSTIN: What's that supposed to mean?

TARA: Can't you do anything without Rick?

JUSTIN: Look, I don't want to argue. We'll duck out in a bit. Just you and me, okay?

(RICK enters.)

RICK: Hey, did I see who I thought I saw going in the gym just now?

JUSTIN: Yeah, and we saw him too.

RICK: Doesn't he know fags aren't welcome here?

JUSTIN: What's the big deal? He's not bothering anyone.

RICK: Are you going soft on queers now or something?

JUSTIN: No, but can't we just forget about it tonight and have a good time?

RICK: Good idea. Tara, you wanna dance?

TARA: What are you up to, Rick?

RICK: Here I am trying to have a good time like Justin suggested and you're, like, so suspicious. I guess I'll just have to go in and dance by myself.

(RICK exits.)

TARA: What's he going to do?

JUSTIN: I don't know.

(The music grows in volume and we hear the sounds of screams, yells, and catcalls in the ix. We hear voices chanting, "Fight, fight, fight," etc. JUSTIN and TARA run off. The music fades until all we hear are the voices chanting.)

Scene Ten

(The chanting and catcalls reach a crescendo as the sound of a car motor roaring enters the mix. CARL runs onstage and stops. We hear a door slam and the motor stops. We hear the voice-overs of Marion and Frank.)

MARION: Is he all right?

FRANK: He's fine.

MARION: What happened?

FRANK: He was fighting with Rick Bowman at the dance.

MARION: Rick? But...

FRANK: His principal said he's been having trouble getting along with the other students lately.

MARION: Does he know why?

FRANK: Those phone calls we were getting...

MARION: What about them?

FRANK: Rick seemed to know why those kids were saying those things...

MARION: About Carl?

FRANK: I'm going to bed.

MARION: But...

FRANK: We'll talk about it tomorrow.

MARION: He needs us now.

FRANK: God damn it Marion, we'll talk about it tomorrow.

(WE hear the sound of a door slamming. CARL steps forward.)

MARION: I thought you went up to your room?

CARL: Just about to. *(He moves to exit.)*

MARION: I want you to talk to me.

CARL: What about?

MARION: What's been happening at school—with your friends—

CARL: I don't—

MARION: You and Rick were fighting. Your father said it had something to do with those phone calls we were getting.

CARL: What if it did? What if that's exactly what it was about? Mom, I don't...it's ...Mom I'm Gay.

MARION: You're...? How do you know?

CARL: Mom I know okay?

MARION: But how can you be sure? Have you...I mean are you...oh my God, oh my God...

CARL: Mom...

MARION: Are you having safe sex?

CARL: Mom...

MARION: Answer me...

CARL: If I was having sex...with anybody, it would be safe...

MARION: Don't lie to me.

CARL: I'm not lying... *(She begins to cry)* Don't cry...please don't cry...

MARION: I'm sorry it's just...I didn't know...

CARL: Mom...

MARION: The thought of you getting that disease—of not knowing this about my own child...

CARL: I'm sorry Mom, I'm really sorry...

MARION: No, no, no you don't have to be sorry...How did they find out? Did you tell them?

CARL: No. It doesn't matter how they found out. They just did. And I don't think I can go back.

MARION: What do you mean?

CARL: To school—I can't take it anymore.

MARION: Now hold on just a minute—

CARL: You don't understand! I can't walk down the hall without being called something—You don't have a clue what it's like—I mean I can't fight everybody, believe me I've tried.

MARION: Then I'll go down to that school and talk to the principal.

CARL: And what do you expect him to do?

MARION: We'll find out. Monday we're going to your school and we'll deal with this together.

CARL: What about Dad?

MARION: It'll be okay. I'll talk to him Love you.

CARL: Love you too.

(CARL moves to exit as we hear transition music and the sounds of a busy street.)

Scene Eleven

(PAULETTE enters and runs to catch up with CARL.)

PAULETTE: Hey...

CARL: Do me a favor will you? Just leave me alone.

PAULETTE: I'm sorry about what happened at the dance.

CARL: I should have known better. I'm such an idiot!

PAULETTE: You're not...

CARL: Look I don't need your pity okay?

PAULETTE: I wasn't offering it.

CARL: What is it with you huh? Why are you always trying to prove what a good person you are?

PAULETTE: I'm not.

CARL: Saint Paulette!

PAULETTE: I was just trying to...

CARL: Yeah, yeah, I know, you were just trying to help.

PAULETTE: I said I was sorry...

CARL: You weren't really trying to help me—you were just trying to prove how superior you are—that's what this is all about for you—

PAULETTE: Okay I was wrong. Is that what you want to hear? Or that Rick's right and all the fags and dykes should be put on an island somewhere where they wouldn't bother the rest of us "normal" people?

CARL: I just want to be left alone. *(He moves to exit.)*

PAULETTE: Alright I admit it! I'm a self-centered egotistical bitch who has to prove how superior she is all the time.

CARL: You just don't give up do you?

PAULETTE: I've been worried...you haven't talked to me and I was wondering what was going on...

CARL: What's been going on? Let's see. Monday my Mom dragged me to the principal's office—she talked, he nodded and looked

concerned—then told her he'd see what he could do about it but the school couldn't be held responsible for what happened off school property. He wants me to attend some Gay student meeting at school or something. For some reason I just don't think it was a big priority for him. What else? Oh yeah, my Dad hasn't talked to me since the night of the dance.

PAULETTE: Your father's not talking to you?

CARL: He never had much to say anyway. Except the next morning after the dance when my mother told him about my situation. *(We hear Frank's voice-over.)*

FRANK: Is this something he's going around telling everybody?

CARL: He knew I was in the house but it didn't matter.

FRANK: He's just a kid! He's probably just confused.

CARL: I've never heard him talk like that before.

FRANK: Is he even willing to try and change? Or has he made up his mind to live like that and we're just supposed to accept it? Well I'm not sure I can.

CARL: He hasn't said anything to me since.

PAULETTE: Carl...

CARL: I'm sick of feeling like I don't belong anywhere.

PAULETTE: I know it's really hard for you right now but...

CARL: Look you've never had your father and just about everybody else you thought were your friends turn their backs on you so don't tell me you know how hard it must be for me because you don't. I'm starting to think that maybe I should just do everybody a favor and disappear.

PAULETTE: What are you talking about? *(Beat.)* You're not thinking about taking off are you?

CARL: What if I am?

PAULETTE: Carl, listen to me—Listen—I told my Uncle Greg what's

been happening...

CARL: Sure, why not? Everybody else knows.

PAULETTE: He told me about that club too ...they're called Gay Straight Alliances. And instead of going to bars, there's also a gay youth club called LYRIC. It's in the Castro.

CARL: So?

PAULETTE: Well...Our school has a Gay Straight Alliance. You'd get a chance to meet the other kids in school who are...

CARL: No.

PAULETTE: Will you at least listen?

CARL: Forget it.

PAULETTE: Have you ever heard of bill AB-537? It protects Gay students from hate crimes... It's there to allow you to be who you are.

CARL: So what do you expect me to do?

PAULETTE: The Gay Straight Alliance has a meeting on Friday.

CARL: And you expect me to go?

PAULETTE: If you want I'll go with you. What do you have to lose?

CARL: Good question.

(He exits. Paulette stands alone on stage as phones begin to ring.)

Scene Twelve

(Telephone ring. Paulette picks up a cell phone as TARA enters holding one. The Hot Line Volunteer is a voice-over.)

TARA: Hello?

VOLUNTEER: Hello, Gay Lesbian Bi Youth Hotline...

(The line is disconnected and we hear the buzz of the dial tone. After a beat the ringing starts again. JUSTIN enters with cell phone.)

JUSTIN: Hello?

(CARL enters and stops in an isolated area.)

PAULETTE: Hello?

VOLUNTEER: Hello, Gay Lesbian Bi Youth Hotline... *(Once again the line is disconnected.)*

CARL: I've been having these dreams...

VOLUNTEER: Hello, Gay Lesbian Bi Youth Hotline this is Jeff speaking...

PAULETTE: Hello?

TARA: Who is this?

CARL: I can see him running up ahead of us. We're yelling at him at the top of our lungs. Run faggot run!

TARA: Look I can't talk right now...I'll call you some other time.

(lights down on TARA.)

VOLUNTEER: Are you still living at home?

PAULETTE: Hello?

CARL: He trips and we're on him with our fists like jack hammers...

JUSTIN: Look whoever you are you're going to have to speak up because I can't hear you.

CARL: Bones crushing...

JUSTIN: Oh, you have the wrong number.

(lights down on JUSTIN.)

PAULETTE: Where are you?

CARL: He's trying to call for help but no one's listening. We're mashing him to nothingness—and the whole time I'm hating doing it but I know if I stop, I'll be next. Then I wake up covered in sweat.

VOLUNTEER: Have your parents said anything to make you think they don't want you there?

CARL: I just want to jump out of bed and run as far away as I can...

VOLUNTEER: There IS a support group called P-FLAG for your parents.

CARL: I want to run back in time before this ever happened...

VOLUNTEER: Your father might just need a little more time to accept it.

PAULETTE: So have you changed your mind about going to the meeting? *(DIAL tone)*Carl?

(lights out on PAULETTE)

CARL: But the future keeps pulling me forward. Dragging me along, out of control. But then there's a part of me that wants to just let go and see where it takes me, secretly hoping that maybe I'll end up somewhere far away where I won't have to pretend I'm someone I'm not. I wouldn't have to lie about a part of myself that I'm trying to understand.

(ANTHONY and RACHEL enter, ANTHONY is laughing.)

RACHEL: Antony, it's not funny.

ANTHONY: Oh girl, you've got to be kidding. She really said that to you?

CARL: Because now I know no matter what happens...there's no turning back.

RACHEL: Can you believe it?

ANTHONY: So what did you say to her?

RACHEL: I told her she could take back the ring and shove it. There's no way I was going to keep seeing her if she's going to start seeing her old girlfriend again.

(We hear the sound of a phone ringing.)

ANTONY: Good for you girl. I'll bet she'll come crawling back to you on her hands and knees. *(We hear the voice-over of PAULETTE.)*

PAULETTE: Hello?

RACHEL: And you know what I'll do if that happens?

CARL: It's me...

ANTONY: Don't go there Rachel...

PAULETTE: It's about time.

RACHEL: Why? What do you think I'll do?

PAULETTE: I was wondering when you were going to call me back—So how was the meeting this time?

ANTONY: Probably throw your high principles out the window and take her back.

RACHEL: Thanks a lot.

CARL: It was different that's for sure.

ANTONY: I can read your mind.

PAULETTE: Is that good or bad?

RACHEL: Antony you can barely read a book.

CARL: Some of it's good. Like I didn't know there were so many important people in history who were gay.

RACHEL: So you don't think I should take her back?

PAULETTE: What about the other kids?

ANTONY: Listen Miss Thing, if my boyfriend told me he wanted to start dating his ex-boyfriend again—I'd be out of there before he could finish his last sentence—And I wouldn't be back!

RACHEL: Maybe you're right.

CARL: Well there's only fifteen of us.

ANTONY: Girl, you know I am.

CARL: I don't really get along with any of them.

PAULETTE: Why not?

ANTONY: Can't you see me sash-shaying out of there?

(He struts off followed by RACHEL.)

CARL: Because there's this guy Antony.

RACHEL: Hey girlfriend, you want some fries with that shake?
(Exit.)

CARL: He acts real faggy. *(Beat.)* And after we saw a documentary about how the Nazis persecuted gays in concentration camps we had a discussion and I said...

PAULETTE: What? *(Beat.)*

CARL: That maybe the Nazis would've left gays alone if the more, you know, queeny ones could've acted normal.

PAULETTE: You didn't.

CARL: It just kind of jumped out of my mouth and Antony went ballistic.

(ANTONY appears.)

ANTONY: And who's standard of normal would they be judged by Butch? Yours or Adolph's?

CARL: All I'm saying is, if it would make life easier, why not act normal?

ANTONY: I'll leave the acting for people who have something to hide and just be myself thank you very much.

CARL: You just act like a queen because you want attention.

ANTONY: And you act like a homophobe because you're a fascist, sexist, Nazi pig!

(ANTONY exits.)

CARL: Then I got into a huge fight with the rest of the class because

they all agreed with Antony. And then I kind of pushed him.

PAULETTE: Kind of?

CARL: He pissed me off.

PAULETTE: You going to apologize?

CARL: I just pushed him, I didn't punch him in the face.

PAULETTE: Come on, you said you'd give it a try.

CARL: I am but it's weird.

PAULETTE: It's as weird as you make it. Just think of it as an adventure.

CARL: You mean like, Carl's adventures at Homo High?

PAULETTE: Remember you can always quit if you don't like it.

CARL: Enough already. I'll handle it...So you want to meet me after the meeting tomorrow or what?

PAULETTE: I usually try to avoid hanging around with fascist sexist Nazi pigs but maybe this time I can make an exception.

(We hear the phone hanging up and CARL exits.)

Scene Thirteen

(School Hallway, A school bell rings as Justin and Paulette enter.)

JUSTIN: Tara's meeting me in a sec. We're heading over to Greasy Nicks' wanna come?

PAULETTE: I can't I'm meeting Carl. We're supposed to go to a movie. Or maybe we could all do something together?

JUSTIN: Ah...

PAULETTE: Aren't you even a little curious about how he's doing?

JUSTIN: Um...yeah sure...

PAULETTE: Then why don't you come and find out?

JUSTIN: I have to wait for Tara.

PAULETTE: Did he ever come on to you or anything?

JUSTIN: Gross.

PAULETTE: Well did he?

JUSTIN: No.

PAULETTE: So what are you afraid of?

JUSTIN: Not him that's for sure.

PAULETTE: Then of what people will think?

JUSTIN: I don't care what other people think.

PAULETTE: Doesn't look like it when Rick's around.

JUSTIN: Why are you always trying to piss people off?

PAULETTE: I don't know. It's just something that comes naturally I guess.

JUSTIN: Look I always liked Carl, but how am I supposed to feel comfortable around him when I know he's...

PAULETTE: Into guys? Because if he's Gay then he must be attracted to you right? God, men and their egos. Look do you want to have sex with every girl you see?

JUSTIN: Practically.

PAULETTE: Come on - Katie Divorski?

JUSTIN: Stop you'll give me nightmares. Okay not every girl. So?

PAULETTE: Think about it. *(Rick enters. He spots them and hesitates.)* Look I gotta go. *(Exits.)*

RICK: What's up?

JUSTIN: Nothing.

RICK: Where's she going?

JUSTIN: Uh... To meet someone...

RICK: Who? *(Beat)*
JUSTIN: Don't Know.
RICK: She seeing someone?
JUSTIN: She didn't say.
RICK: Uh huh...
JUSTIN: You've been going around calling her a slut ever since you broke up...
RICK: She is isn't she?
JUSTIN: What do you care who she's seeing?
(Tara enters)
TARA: Sorry I'm late.
RICK: So she is.
JUSTIN: I told you ...
RICK: You're useless! *(Rick exits.)*
TARA: What's up with him?
JUSTIN: He's obsessed.
TARA: Don't tell – with Paulette – right?
JUSTIN: Yeah... I didn't tell him she was going to meet Carl.
TARA: He would've probably flipped out if you did – Like when me mother heard about it from one of her friends? God she wouldn't shut up about it. I think it's probably better for everyone that Carl doesn't hang out with us any more. Maybe now everything will get back to normal.
JUSTIN: Just forget he ever existed?
TARA: I'm not saying that.
JUSTIN: Sounds like it to me.
TARA: Well I'm sure he's already forgotten me because remember I

really liked him and he only "pretended" he liked me. So maybe we're even.
JUSTIN: That's twisted.
TARA: You see? This whole thing just makes me crazy. *(pause)*
JUSTIN: It all happened so fast I don't even know what to think anymore. I mean would it be such a big deal just to talk to him?
TARA: You do what you want, just leave me out of it.
(Tara exits. After a beat Justin exits. Transition music and ambient street sound is heard.)

Scene Fourteen

(On the street. The transition music fades out and we hear ambient street sounds. Antony and Rachel enter.)
ANTONY: Come on girl, pull yourself together.
RACHEL: But it was so sad.
ANTONY: It's only a movie.
RACHEL: I know but... *(Carl enters.)*
ANTONY: Uh oh, here comes trouble.
CARL: Anthony, can I talk to you for a sec?
RACHEL: Why? So you can insult him again?
CARL: Was I talking to you?
ANTONY: It's okay Rachel.
CARL: Do you mind?
RACHEL: Call me if he starts giving you a hard time. *(She exits.)*
CARL: You know that thing that happened at the meeting the other day...
ANTONY: Look it's okay, as long as we agree that we've got the

right to disagree, it's cool.

CARL: All I meant was...

ANTONY: Wouldn't life be easier for all of us if everyone acted straight?

CARL: Wouldn't it?

ANTONY: Sure, Unfortunately I can't act straight enough for my family of jocks but you can imagine how hard I tried. It was exhausting.

CARL: But if you could be straight...

ANTONY: I'm happy the way I am.

CARL: But...

ANTONY: I don't have a problem with who I am, if that's a problem for some people too bad for them. I figure as long as I'm not hurting anybody, people should mind their own business and I'll mind mine. (Beat.)

CARL: Did you always think you were ...?

ANTONY: It wasn't something I had to think about - You just know you are and you either accept it and get on with your life or you end up where you are.

CARL: And where's that?

ANTONY: I don't know exactly where you got the idea to check us out but I bet it's because somehow that closet door of yours was smashed open and people found

out you weren't as straight as they thought you were. But you haven't really come out yet. You're still watching from the other side of the closet hoping that you can figure another way out. Trust me girlfriend there isn't.

CARL: See - Like why do you have to call me girlfriend?

ANTONY: (He puts on a macho act.) "Oh right, sorry buddy. What'd ya say we got shoot some pool - down some brewskis -

pick up a couple of chicks and beat up some fags?"

CARL: Been there, done that. (Beat.) Uh, what are you doing now?

ANTONY: Uh...what do you mean?

CARL: A friend of mine's coming to pick me up any minute now and... I was thinking... You wanna hang out with us?

ANTONY: You're asking moi?

CARL: Sure...

ANTONY: Well I don't know, my schedule is just about completely full ... oh hell sure, why not?

CARL: I've just got to go in and pick up my backpack..

ANTONY: I'll be here.

(Carl exists. After a few beats Paulette enter looking for Carl. She exits. After a beat Rick enters.)

RICK: Hey, do you know Carl Hunter?

ANTONY: Yeah, are you the friend he was expecting?

RICK: I don't think he's expecting me. So are you a member of the fag club?

ANTONY: Excuse me?

RICK: I heard Carl had joined some kind of special club. This is where you meet isn't it?

ANTONY: Maybe that's something you should be asking him.

RICK: It must be because I've been watching people go in and out of here and they all look queer - like you.

ANTONY: Ummm... maybe I better go and see what's keeping Carl.

RICK: Why, are you his boyfriend?

ANTONY: Hey, who the hell are you? *(Rick grabs Anthony by his collar and begins to threaten him.)* Let go of me.

RICK: What if I don't? You gonna scratch me with your nails? (*Carl enters.*)

CARL: Okay she should be here any second.

RICK: So this is where you've been hiding out, huh?

CARL: How did you know where we meet?

RICK: I was curious who Paulette was sneaking off with.

CARL: You followed her?

ANTONY: Could you let me go now?

RICK: Am I making you nervous?

ANTONY: No, it's just that the last time I was this close to another guy we were slow dancing.

RICK: Watch your mouth faggot –

CARL: Stop it! He's not the reason you came here.

(*Rick releases Anthony.*)

RICK: So now you're a total fag?

CARL: Why did you come here?

RICK: I told you.

CARL: You're lying.

RICK: Huh?

CARL: Because you're scared –

RICK: Wha –

CARL: That's what's really been bugging you all along isn't it?

RICK: What are you -?

CARL: Scared because we messed around when we were twelve?

ANTONY: Uh oh.

CARL: You weren't scared back then –

RICK: Shut up –

CARL: As I remember you were the one who started it –

RICK: You're the one who's lying –

CARL: Am I? Just because you tried doesn't make you Gay Rick.

RICK: Nothing ever happened.

CARL: That's what you've been afraid of – that I would tell –

ANTONY: Come on Carl lets go –

RICK: That never happened – (*Paulette enters.*)

ANTONY: Carl, you can get kicked out of the Gay-Straight Alliance if they catch you fighting.

PAULETTE: What's going on?

CARL: I don't care.

PAULETTE: What's he doing here?

CARL: He followed you.

ANTONY: This boy has some huge personal issues to work out girlfriend. In fact if Carl wanted to he could tell everyone your little secret.

PAULETTE: What secret?

RICK: Nothing happened!

ANTONY: Hey girlfriend de-nial is not just a big river in Egypt. (*Rick jumps on Antony.*)

RICK: Shut up faggot!

ANTONY: Get off me you creep!

CARL: Leave him alone – I said leave him alone! (*Carl pulls Rick of Anthony. Carl and Rick fight.*)

ANTONY: Guys – Guys stop – (*Carl pins Rick down.*)

CARL: I'm not backing down anymore you hear me?

PAULETTE: Carl that's enough let him up –

RICK: I'm going to kill you you bastard –

ANTONY: Stop man – he's had it –

(Anthony and Paulette try to pull Carl off Rick and Rick slips loose and backs away. Carl quickly moves after him.)

PAULETTE: Call someone – Go and get someone who can stop them –

ANTONY: But... *(Carl and Rick continue the fight off stage.)*

PAULETTE: Do it!

(Paulette and Anthony exit as we hear the sound of an ambulance siren. It transforms into the sound of someone running. Heart pumping. Gasping for breath. Carl appears in an isolated area.)

CARL: I can see him in front of me – Running as fast as he can, but we both know I'm faster. He's within arm's reach, just like in my dream. He stumbles – falls – and my fists are pounding like jack-hammers – wanting to hear those bones crush – wanting to see the pain and fear in his eyes – Rick's eyes – My fists just keep slamming away – at him – at me – Somewhere far away I can hear people yelling – trying to pull me away but the words in my head block them out. All the words jammed into my head until *(Voice overs: Faggot, queer, homo, fairy, etc – repeat until the end of the section.)* whatever was left of me felt worthless – empty – Until I was filled with hate... "You bastard – Why couldn't you just leave me alone?!" *(Beat.)* Then time stands still... I'm looking at a face I don't remember covered in blood and I'm thinking... that could be me... Everything flows together after that... Paulette, Antony... the ambulance... the Police... *(We hear the sound of a car motoring down a highway.)* Then I'm sitting in the car... Dad's driving – He hasn't looked at me since he picked me up... He can't... I could hear the embarrassment in his voice as he answered the questions... "No my son doesn't have a history with violence.." How little you know Dad, how little you know. Sorry I screwed up again. I don't seem to fit in anywhere do I? I wish I could say something that could make you understand but the words won't form in my mouth. Can't find

the words that will make me stop being a stranger in your eyes.

(We hear the sound of a phone ringing. We hear the voice-overs of Justin and Marion.)

MARION: Hello?

CARL: The car engine is roaring in my ears...

JUSTIN: Mrs. Hunter?

CARL: But it's the silence between you and me that's deafening.

MARION: Who is this?

CARL: It's me! Carl! Remember me? Your son? Nothing's changed – I'm still here –

JUSTIN: Justin... I just called... is Carl there?

MARION: No...

JUSTIN: Well will you tell him that I called? Ummm... and that I talked to Rick's parents... He's going to be okay.

MARION: Thank god...

JUSTIN: And tell him... ummm... I'll call back...

(We hear a dial tone as Carl talks)

CARL: I remember when I was a kid you used to say I had so much energy that if you and Mom weren't around to keep my feet on the ground I would fly to the moon and back before anyone even noticed I was missing... remember?

(We hear the sound of a phone ringing.)

(We hear a voice-over of Frank answering the phone.)

FRANK: Hello? Hello? Do you know what time it is?

CARL: Yeah, that's where I'd like to be. Where I wouldn't be weighed down by labels and rules that don't make any sense to me anymore.

FRANK: Your mother has been worried sick about you.

(The voice-overs of other characters bleed in.)

FRANK: I want you to come home right now –

CARL: Just thought I'd call you and let you guys know I'll be all right... I'll be thinking of you...

RICK: Are you kidding? I don't have faggots for friends.

FRANK: Carl – Listen to me – Listen –

JUSTIN: Don't try and pretend you don't know what kind of bars are in the Castro.

FRANK: I know I haven't been dealing with this very well –

CARL: This is just going to make everything easier for everyone.

RICK: He never said anything about being queer.

FRANK: No that wouldn't make things easier –

CARL: I don't belong here anymore...

JUSTIN: Don't make him bleed, you could get AIDS.

FRANK: Of Course you belong...

TARA: My mother thinks it's against the will of God.

CARL: No I don't –

FRANK: You're not listening to me –

RICK: He's a fag...

CARL: You don't hate anybody just because they're different.

FRANK: Will you just listen!

TARA: Maybe it's better for everyone that he doesn't hang out with us any more...

CARL: Dad, you don't understand

FRANK: Son, I'm sorry...

JUSTIN: Forget that he ever existed...

FRANK: For God's sake Carl – Don't please –

CARL: They never let him live it down.

RICK: You want to fight me faggot?

FRANK: I-I want you to come home...

PAULETTE: You're brave enough to go to a Gay bar, but not to the dance?

CARL: It's not the same thing.

PAULETTE: You've got just as much right to be there as anybody else.

FRANK: I'm willing to do whatever it takes to make this work son...

CARL: Once he was labeled a fag, nobody talked to him...

ANTONY: Wouldn't life be easier for all of us if everyone acted straight?

FRANK: Whatever it takes – We'll work it out...

CARL: I tried praying as hard as I could...

ANTHONY: I'm happy the way I am.

FRANK: Carl please...

PAULETTE: You can't just give up.

CARL: I'm not backing down.

ANTONY: You either accept it and get on with your life or you end up where you are.

CARL: And where's that?

FRANK: O.K. Come home... just come home...

CARL: There's only one way I'm coming home and it's this way...

FRANK: O.K. Your mother and I love you son...

(Carl exits and we hear the sound of a phone dial tone.)

THE END

The Other Side of Education

Integrating Tolerance Training In Your School Curriculum

- A Look at Homophobia in School Today
- Identifying a Need on Your Campus
- Pre-Show Staff Development
- Production Tips For *The Other Side of the Closet*
- Post-Show Follow Up
- Further Resources

**Produced by Sara Staley
with the New Conservatory Theatre Center
with some content adapted from GLSEN,
Teaching Tolerance, and the GSA Network**

A Look at What LGBT Youth Face in School Today

- 84% of LGBT youth reported that they sometimes or frequently heard homophobic comments in their schools¹
- The vast majority of victims of anti-lesbian/gay violence – possibly more than 80% - never report the incident, often due to fear of being “outed”²
- LGBT youth are two to four times more likely as than their heterosexual peers to have been threatened or injured with a weapon at school³
- Gay teens are two times more likely than their heterosexual peers to attempt suicide.⁴

1. 2001 GLSEN survey of LGBT youth
2. New York Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project Report, 1996
3. Safe Schools Report, 1997
4. 2001 report from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

Identify a Need for Tolerance Education on Your Campus

- **Talk to Students**

You may have the perception that your campus is a safe and accepting environment for all, but until you really talk to those students affected by homophobia, you are making a dangerous assumption. If your campus has a GSA club, this is a great place to start in getting youth perspectives on harassment and violence at your school.

- **Be a Fly on the Wall**

Observe students' interactions. Pay attention to what is happening to marginalized youth both physically and verbally in your classroom and hallways. Don't turn your back to signs of hate & intolerance on your campus.

- **Communicate with Staff**

Communicate with other staff members on issues of homophobia at school, get their perspective and find allies for integrating tolerance education into your curriculum. Develop a staff training program on issues of diversity and tolerance so that everyone is on the same page.

Staff Development Ten Things Educators Can Do

- **Do Not Assume Heterosexuality**

School staff must be inclusive of all students in their language and attitudes.

- **Guarantee Equality**

Schools should add sexual orientation and gender identity to their non-discrimination and harassment policies.

- **Create a Safe Environment**

School staff must make it clear that neither physical violence nor harassing language will be tolerated.

- **Provide Training for Staff**

Developing the skills to meet the needs of all students should be expected of all staff regardless of their personal beliefs.

- **Provide Health Education**

Health education on sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases should sensitively include the issues of LGBT youth.

- **Be a Role Model**

Set an example for your students by demonstrating respectful language, intervening during verbal or physical harassment and by bringing diverse themes into the classroom.

- **Show Support for Students**

You can contribute to peer support and acceptance by becoming involved in your school's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) club.

- **Reassess the Curriculum**

Educators need to integrate LGBT issues throughout their curriculum.

- **Broaden Campus-Wide Programs**

Campus events such as assemblies, guest speakers, etc. can help to educate and incorporate LGBT issues.

- **Don't Give Up!**

Being an advocate for LGBT issues and diversity training at your school may unfortunately pit you against students, parents or other members of your school staff. Don't get discouraged ... your efforts will make a positive difference in the lives of countless students.

Production Tips for *The Other Side of the Closet*

- *The Other Side of the Closet* should ideally be presented as a mandatory assembly for all or part of the school. This insures that all students will remain for the entire program. It is up to the school if parent permission slips are issued. A preview night for parent audiences may also be staged prior to presenting the program during school hours. The program should include the presentation of the play as well as a facilitated discussion with the cast and audience following the play. Some guidelines for the post-show discussion are included in the next section of this guide. Because *Closet* is a hard-hitting program, including the post-show discussion allows students to process the issues and questions that come up for them during the show in a safe and supportive environment.
- The play can be staged in any theatre, gymnasium, cafeteria, library or other multi-purpose room. Keeping the stag-

ing area in close proximity to the audience helps encourage participation during the post-show discussion. Costumes, sets and props can be kept to a minimum. The play should flow easily from one scene to the next to keep the running time down and to fit the program easily into school assembly scheduling. No special stage lighting is needed to effectively present the program, but a sufficient sound system should be available for voice & sound cues.

- If your school or organization has a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) or other tolerance promoting club, then students in the club can be involved in the production by publicizing the program on campus, introducing the show to the student body as well as being involved in the post-show discussion. This is a great way for your GSA to have a presence on campus.

Post-Show Follow Up

Group Facilitation Tips:

- When facilitating a group discussion, be sure to repeat the questions and answers that come from the audience. This not only validates the person speaking, but by repeating, you ensure that the whole group hears what was said.
- Always begin the discussion by laying out ground rules such as raising hands, respecting everyone else's opinion in the room, etc. This helps establish that you are creating a safe environment to discuss a sensitive issue.
- Try to ask open ended questions that will solicit more than a "yes" or "no" response.
- It is advisable to keep the post-show discussion within the

realm of the play. Staying away from personal testimony during the post-show discussion keeps the entire process educational and story-based without having a personal agenda of any sort. It is also advisable to not seek out personal testimony from students in the audience unless they offer it up themselves. Singling out LGBT students can often do more harm than good, especially if the school has not received much in the way of diversity training.

- You may be overstepping your bounds as an educator if you get into any religious aspects of this issue. Remember that the main message behind this program is that everyone deserves to be treated with respect, no matter what their sexual orientation.
- It is advisable to include the post-performance discussion of this program, as there are a lot of issues that come up during the play, and it could do more harm than good to leave students with no time to process what they see on stage.

The following are suggested questions to present during the post-show discussion. These are only suggestions, as the post-show portion of the program can be tailored to fit your organizations' needs.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- Is it difficult to be different? Why or Why Not?
- How many of you have ever felt like you didn't fit it? (raise hands)
- What incident was Carl involved in at the beginning of the play?
- What do you suppose made Carl choose to be involved in a violent incident against a gay individual like himself?

-
- How did Carl change from the beginning of the play to the end of the play?
 - Where did Carl's violence come from at the end of the play vs. the beginning of the play?
 - What do you think happened to Carl at the end of the play? Why do you suppose the playwright left the ending a bit ambiguous?
 - What other ways could Carl have dealt with his problems with Rick?
 - Where did Rick's anger come from?
 - What makes individuals like Rick feel that they have the right to hate?
 - What derogatory words/phrases did we hear in the play?
 - What affect did those words have on Carl?
 - Why did Paulette stand up for Carl? Is that a hard thing to do? Why or Why not?
 - What influenced Tara in her reaction to Carl's coming out? What about the other characters?
 - Why do we enjoy seeing Antony on stage?
 - What is it about him that Carl was not comfortable with?
 - What trait could we replace Carl's gayness with and still have the same play? Why?

Further Resources

The Following is a list of National organizations that can give you further information and/or training on how to sensitively approach GLBT issues and diversity training in your school.

- The Gay Straight Alliance Network (GSA)

Empowering youth advocates to fight homophobia. A nation-wide organization that supports GSA clubs in Junior

High and High Schools.

www.gsanetwork.org

- The Safe Schools Coalition

To reduce bias-based bullying and violence in schools and to help schools better meet the needs of sexual minority youth and children with sexual minority parents/guardians locally, nationally and internationally.

www.safeschoolscoalition.org

- Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

GLSEN strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

www.glsen.org

- Parents and Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG)

PFLAG is a national non-profit organization with over 200,000 members and supporters and almost 500 affiliates in the United States.

www.pflag.org



*Left to right: Stacy Powell,
Bill Allen, Nathan Frye,
Juliet Tanner, front Matt
Boucher in NCTC's 2001
production, directed by
Arturo Catricala Photo:
Lois Tema*

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